

# INDIANA UNIVERSITY

## DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

### **Guide for Graduate Students in the Department of Religious Studies**

The information in this Guide is meant to help graduate students (and the faculty who advise them) in navigating the requirements for the PhD in the Department of Religious Studies. It supplements and does not replace the [Graduate School Bulletin](#)), which is the ultimate authority in all requirements and regulations. In addition to the section of the [Bulletin](#) on the Department, be sure to consult the sections on “Academic Regulations” and “General Requirements for Advanced Degrees” which contain rules that govern all degree programs. If anything in this Guide seems to contradict the [Bulletin](#), you should follow the [Bulletin](#).

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### **General Advice for All Students**

The faculty of the Department is strongly committed to the training and mentoring of graduate students, who embody the future of the academic study of religion. Every faculty member is available to offer you advice and to talk with you about your interests and concerns, but the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) should be your first stop for information about requirements, financial aid, and the like. The DGS is assisted by the Department’s Graduate Secretary, a staff member who handles much of the essential paperwork and other practical matters. The DGS chairs the Graduate Studies Committee, which decides on graduate admissions, discusses policy issues, and makes final determinations on exceptions to requirements, prize competitions, and the like.

The person primarily responsible for getting you through your graduate program in an efficient and profitable manner, however, is yourself. Because the faculty member who is the DGS changes regularly and other faculty go on leaves, you are the element of continuity during your time at IU. It behooves you to familiarize

yourself with the requirements of your degree program and to take the initiative in formulating a plan to meet those requirements. The information in this Guide is designed to help you to do that.

## **I. Getting the PhD**

The Ph.D. program is designed to prepare students to teach in colleges, universities, or seminaries and to carry out research in the field. Your goal is to become a professional in the field of religious studies, and you should seek to acquire the skills that you will need to become a successful and productive teacher and scholar in your area of interest.

### **A. Time Limits, Expectations, and Advising**

#### **1. Time Limits and Expectations**

Until you complete all requirements but the dissertation (including the Qualifying Examination), you are known as a “doctoral student.” After you have passed your Qualifying Examination and completed all requirements except the dissertation, you become a “doctoral candidate.” Each of these two phases comes with a limit of seven years.

As a doctoral student, you must complete all the coursework that you offer for the degree within seven years before passing your Qualifying Examination. This includes courses that you use from your MA program and that you transfer from another institution. This rule, then, can cause complications for students who have taken time off between a masters program and entering the PhD program if they wish to use credits from their masters program for their PhD. Any course older than seven years has “expired,” and you must either take new courses to replace the expired hours or “revalidate” the expired course(s) in a procedure that is described in the Bulletin. Avoid this complication by taking your Qualifying Examination in a timely manner.

Likewise, once you become a doctoral candidate, you have seven years to submit and defend a dissertation. The seven years are counted from the date of your Qualifying Examination (the oral exam). At the end of the seven years, your candidacy expires and you may no longer submit a dissertation. In this case you may renew your candidacy for another three years by fulfilling any requirements for the PhD that were added since you entered candidacy and by taking a new Qualifying Examination. Avoid this fate by completing your dissertation in a timely manner.

The expectation of the Graduate School and the Department is that you will become a candidate by completing coursework and language requirements and passing the Qualifying Examination by the end of the third post-masters year. Numerous policies, including those governing financial aid, are based on this expectation. For example, some financial aid packages to entering doctoral students offer three years of support past the masters: it is expected that by the end of the third year you will have accumulated the required 90 credit hours and taken your Qualifying Examination so that you can register for the inexpensive G901. Therefore, your goal should be to complete required courses in your first two years and to use the third year to finish language requirements and to prepare for and take the Qualifying Examination.

## 2. Advising

The Graduate School's policy is that doctoral students are advised by an Advisory Committee, which is to be appointed by the end of the first year and which supervises the Qualifying Examination. This appointment is an online process initiated by the student. The form may be found on the website of the College of Arts and Sciences under Current Graduate Students and then Record Changes.

In the meantime, the Department advises doctoral students through faculty advising groups, which are organized by fields of study. These groups currently consist of Ethics, Philosophy, and Politics, Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern Religions, Religions of South Asia, Jewish Thought and Culture, Religion in the Americas, History of Christianity, and Comparative and Transnational Studies of the Muslim Tradition. Before you register for classes in your first semester, you will meet with the DGS, who will advise you on your fall schedule and assign you to an advising group. In most cases, the choice will be obvious.

You should meet with your advising group right away, in September of your first semester, to discuss such matters as your language requirements, your minor department, etc. The Department provides a yellow Advising Form to record the results of this conversation. You should then meet with your advising group every April until you take the Qualifying Examination, to chart your progress and to make plans for the following year. Once again the yellow form should be used to record decisions and evaluations. At the meeting in April of your second year, you should schedule your Qualifying Examination and organize your Advisory Committee, which will not be identical with the advising group. See below for more information on this process.

Once you have passed your Qualifying Examination and have become a doctoral candidate, your advisor becomes the faculty member who will direct your dissertation. Together with that faculty member you will organize your Research Committee for your dissertation, which need not be identical with your Advisory Committee for the Qualifying Examination. See below for more information on this process.

Throughout your entire career the DGS is available to you for consultation on any facet of your program. The DGS will also monitor your progress and intervene if things are not moving in a timely manner.

## **B. Credit Hours and Course Requirements**

### 1. Credit Hours

You must earn 90 hours of graduate credit. These can include the hours that you earned while an MA student at IU if you were one: thus, you must earn 60 hours beyond the 30 required for that degree. You may transfer up to 30 hours from another institution (e.g., if you earned your masters elsewhere) upon the recommendation of the DGS to the Graduate School. Transfer credits must have grades of B or better and must have been earned at accredited institutions. All of these credit hours are subject to the seven-year rule (see above regarding time limits).

You may earn up to 30 credit hours for writing your dissertation and MA thesis or language project. That is, if you earned 6 hours of credit at IU in R698 or R699, you can earn only another 24 for the dissertation. Dissertation credits are earned under R799. Most students do not earn dissertation credits while they are actually writing the dissertation: instead, they "bank" them while doing course work. That is, if you are an Associate Instructor and receiving a tuition credit for 15 credit

hours in a semester, you should register for the courses that you wish to take, and if the total of their credit hours is less than 15 you should register for the remaining credit hours that are paid for as R799.

Note that the courses for graduate students in Reading French, German, or Spanish (e.g., F491) do not accumulate hours toward the degree. You have to pay for these hours, but they do not count.

## 2. Required Course Work

You must take the following courses:

- (1) R665 (4 hours)
- (2) A second thematic, methodological, or cross-cultural seminar (identified as such by the DGS) (4 hours)
- (3) 12 hours at the 700-level
- (4) Teaching Practicum (R790) (1 hour)

If you took R665 as an MA student at IU, you do not need to take it again.

Thematic, methodological, or cross-cultural seminars are designed to introduce students to the history of and current research in a specific methodological orientation or thematic focus within Religious Studies. Some students may find it useful to take more than two (including R665) such seminars. You may, however, apply only one such seminar at the 700-level (4 hours) to the fulfillment of the 700-level requirement.

700-level courses are usually (but not always) linked to a 600-level seminar and are designed to prepare students for professional research and writing in the field. They presume the ability to use the appropriate languages of scholarship and to work in the original source languages. You may apply an independent research course (R791, R792, R793, R794) to the 700-level requirement, but no more than 4 hours of such.

The Teaching Practicum (R790) requires you to prepare the syllabus, bibliography, assignments, and exams for a course in your field under the supervision of a faculty member. Many students take this course in connection with one of their assignments as an Associate Instructor. Because it is only 1 credit hour, students sometimes put this requirement off, figuring that it is easy to do “later,” and then find that their failure to have done it becomes a snag when they are ready to apply for candidacy. Do not put this off.

## 3. Outside Minor

All doctoral students at IU must complete a minor outside their home department. While most doctoral minors are department-based (e.g. History, East Asian Languages and Cultures), others are inter-departmental programs or supervised by committees (e.g., Ancient Studies, Jewish Studies, Medieval Studies). The requirements for a doctoral minor vary and are controlled by the relevant department, program, or committee. Most require 12 credit hours.

You have a wide range of possibilities in choosing your outside minor. The outside minor intends to enhance the value of the degree and your scholarly skills by incorporating the methods and issues of a related discipline. You should discuss your outside minor with the DGS and your advising group and begin working toward it as soon as possible. With rare exceptions, a faculty member from the outside minor must be a member of the student’s Advisory Committee, that is, the committee that

administers the Qualifying Examination. Thus, you should get acquainted with faculty in your outside minor as soon as possible.

When you have completed the requirements for your minor, you should ask the DGS or Graduate Secretary of the minor department to send a letter to that effect to the Department's DGS for your file.

## **C. Language Requirements**

### 1. Languages of Scholarship

Doctoral students must demonstrate reading proficiency in at least two modern languages of scholarship: French and German. You may substitute another modern language for one of these with the approval of the DGS and your advising group. To make a substitution, you need to make a written request/justification to the DGS with the support of your advising group.

### 2. Primary Source Languages

Many students must show proficiency in one or more primary source languages. See the descriptions of the fields of study below. Some advising groups (e.g., Judaism and Christianity in Antiquity) have precisely formulated requirements. You will determine with your advising group which languages you need to learn and how you will demonstrate proficiency in them; these decisions should be recorded on the yellow advising form. Sometimes proficiency is demonstrated through an examination administered by faculty in the Department and/or with the cooperation of another department as appropriate, and sometimes through course work in the language.

## **D. Research Papers Requirements**

You must produce two research papers of between 20-30 pages (not counting endnotes) prior to taking your Qualifying Examination. These papers will normally develop out of your 700-level seminars, but they may grow out of other research projects. These papers are to be at a professional level of quality, modeled on a submission to a refereed journal in your area of interest, and should follow that journal's requirements for length and documentation (e.g., Turabian, MLA, SBL Handbook of Style, Chicago Manual of Style). These research papers must be approved for your file by a member of the faculty; the same professor cannot approve both papers. There is a form for this purpose in the office. An approved research paper may not be a language translation, a bibliographic essay, a text edition, or a set of field notes. Annotated translations may be accepted with the approval of the Graduate Studies Committee. For details, consult the DGS.

## **E. The Qualifying Examination**

As you finish your course work, you are reviewed for permission to take the Qualifying Examination. Permission to take the Qualifying Examination presupposes that in the semester you take the exam (or earlier) you will have completed all other requirements (including languages), you have no outstanding incompletes, and you are not on academic probation. In rare cases, the DGS may allow you to take your Qualifying Examination and to complete a requirement (e.g., a remaining language)

shortly thereafter. You cannot, however, be nominated to candidacy and thus be allowed to register for G901 and to submit a dissertation proposal until you have completed all requirements and passed the Qualifying Examination. It is expected that you will take your Qualifying Examination no later than your sixth semester after the master's degree.

The Qualifying Examination is supervised by a committee of faculty members, officially known as your Advisory Committee. The Graduate School requires that the Advisory Committee have at least three members: two must come from the Department (adjuncts qualify) and one must represent your outside minor. Note that some members of the Department can also represent an outside minor to which they belong (e.g., Jewish Studies), but then you have to have two more people from the Department.

You should organize your Advisory Committee in your fourth semester at the latest. These people will plan with you what each part of the Qualifying Examination will cover and help you to develop bibliographies. They compose the questions and evaluate your performance. Not all members of your Advisory Committee need be experts in your area of study: often a member of the committee represents a methodological or thematic angle and works with you on an exam because he or she taught a theoretical/methodological/thematic seminar when you took it.

The Qualifying Examination consists of written exams totaling 12 hours, divided into at least three parts, and an oral exam, all of which are to be completed within a three-week period. Each field of study has its own specifications as to the number and topics of exams. See the descriptions of the fields below.

Although minor variations on the Department's basic structure are permitted (e.g., taking a break between the first and second two hours of a single 4-hour exam), any significant variation on the basic exam structure (e.g., substitution of a major paper for an exam) requires your consent and the approval of the DGS. These days most students write their exams on a computer provided by the Department (often in a vacant faculty office).

At the conclusion of the oral part of the exam, the Advisory Committee determines the grade. The possibilities are the following:

Honors: exceptional performance

Pass: adequate to very good performance

Fail: one or more exams is/are inadequate and must be re-written

Each faculty member records an individual vote. The chair of the committee then tallies the votes and informs the student of the committee's decision as the concluding rite of the Qualifying Examination. For the student to receive Honors, the vote must be unanimous. The Qualifying Examination may be retaken once, either whole or in part, and this will be determined by the committee before its verdict is announced.

If you pass the Qualifying Examination and you have completed all other requirements, the members of the Advisory Committee should sign your Nomination to Candidacy form and pass it on to the DGS. You and/or the DGS should prepare this form and have it ready for possible signing at the oral examination.

## **F. The Dissertation**

Once you have passed the Qualifying Examination and your candidacy has been accepted by the Graduate School, you are eligible to submit a proposal for the dissertation. You now must organize yet another committee: the Research

Committee. Once again there are membership requirements. The chair of the Research Committee is the director of your dissertation. (If this faculty member is not yet tenured, you should check with the DGS to ensure that he or she is authorized to serve as director.) Two more members must come from the Department, and one member represents the minor area. In this case, however, if the dissertation research will not touch closely on the area of the minor, the DGS can ask the minor department to waive this requirement.

Your Research Committee meets formally twice: to approve your proposal and to examine you at the defense. The dissertation proposal is a document of approximately 10-15 pages, annotated and followed by a bibliography. The Department has a handout on preparing the proposal. You formulate the proposal with your director and circulate it to the other committee members for their comments and suggestions. The meeting to approve the proposal should not be a time of suspense over whether the proposal will be approved, but an opportunity for you and the committee to reflect thoughtfully on how you should go about your project. Please note that the form to bring to the proposal approval meeting, the “Nomination of Research Committee for the PhD,” requires you to append a “one-two page summary of the proposed research.” This is not to be confused with the proposal itself. This form (with appended summary) is signed by the members of the RC, submitted to the Chair for signature, and then forwarded to the Graduate School.

You write the dissertation under the guidance of your director. The extent of involvement of committee members in the process of writing varies considerably, but usually a committee member may read in early drafts only one or two chapters having to do with his or her area of expertise (if any at all), but will read the entire dissertation when it is ready to be defended.

While you write the dissertation, you must be continuously enrolled at IU, at least part-time. As a doctoral candidate you may register for G901, which charges a nominal flat fee and carries six “dummy” credit hours that certify you as a full-time student (for financial aid, health insurance, and other purposes) but do not accumulate to any degree. You may register for G901 for a maximum of six semesters. If you are still not finished after that, you must register each fall and spring for at least one hour of R799 until you finish. If you defend your dissertation in a summer semester, you must register for one hour of R799 in that semester as well. Until your candidacy expires, you are considered a full-time student even when you register for only one hour of R799.

The defense of a dissertation is a public event. You must give formal notice of the date, time, and place of your defense to the Graduate School thirty days prior to the defense; this formal notice is posted on the web. Other faculty and graduate students may attend the defense. Once the dissertation is approved, you must prepare the manuscript according to strict guidelines determined by the Graduate School. Check with the Graduate School about all facets of the defense and submission process.

If you want to participate in Commencement, you must submit an application for an advanced degree at the Graduate School office. Otherwise, the various sets of documentation surrounding the approval of the dissertation suffice for receiving your degree. Information about Commencement is always posted on the IUB web site early in the spring semester.

## **II. The Doctoral Program Fields of Study**

The doctoral program is composed of the following fields of study:

1) Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern Religions; 2) Ethics, Philosophy, and Politics in the Study of Religion; 3) History of Christianity; 4) Jewish Thought and Culture; 5) Religion in the Americas; 6) Comparative and Transnational Studies of the Muslim Tradition; and 7) Religions of South Asia. *In their statement of purpose, applicants to the doctoral program should simply explain their intellectual interests, indicate which field of study they hope to pursue, and specify which faculty they hope to work with.*